

Abkhazia Occupied by Russia Even Before August 2008 War, Russia Fully Responsible for Human Rights Violations, Strasbourg Court Rules

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Ministry of Justice of Georgia is sued a statement regarding the Strasbourg court's decision on the case "Mamasakhlisi and others against Georgia and Russia", according to which the territory of Abkhazia was under the effective control of the Russian Federation even before the August 2008 war, and Russia bears full responsibility for human rights violations in occupied Abkhazia.

"As it is known to the public, on January 21, 2021, Georgia won a historic victory against Russia in the case of the August 2008 war in Strasbourg, and it was confirmed that the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia have been occupied by Russia since 2008. In this case, for the first time, Russia's responsibility for human rights violations committed in the occupied territories before the 2008 war was established. In particular, the petitioners Levan Mamasakhlisi and Grigol Nanava were illegally arrested and imprisoned in Dranda prison in Russian-occupied Abkhazia in 2001-2007 and 2003-2005. They were subjected to inhumane treatment and were not allowed to see their family members.

Taking into account the given facts and the evidence provided by the government, the Strasbourg court found that Russia is fully responsible for these human rights violations committed against Georgian citizens, as it exercised effective control over Abkhazia even before the August 2008 war. The Strasbourg court emphasized that, according to international law, Abkhazia is an integral part of Georgia, although it has not been under the control of the central government of Georgia since the 1990s due to decisive military, economic and political interference by Russia.

In addition, by the same decision of the



European Court, the occupation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia by Soviet Russia in 1921 and Russia's direct involvement in the military conflict in favor of the Abkhazians in the 1990s were already legally confirmed. In particular, the Strasbourg court concluded that in the mentioned conflict Abkhazians not only used Russian weapons and a significant number of Russians fought on their side, but without the direct involvement of Russian military units and combat equipment, it would have been impossible to end the conflict with a military victory for the separatists. The European

Court drew attention to the fact that a number of international sources point to the 'ethnic cleansing' of Georgians during this conflict," the statement reads.

The Chairman of Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili said that Strasbourg's decision to confirm that since 1993 the territory of Abkhazia has been legally recognized as the territory occupied by Russia, is the result of the Georgian government's active involvement in international mechanisms

"You know that in January 2021, the decision of the Strasbourg Court was made, which determined that after 2008,

Russia has effective control over Abkhazia and also over Samachablo, which in legal terms means occupation. This decision stated that even before 2008, Russia exercised effective control. As of today, we can say that it has been confirmed by the court document of the Strasbourg court that since 1993 the territory of Abkhazia has been legally recognized as the territory occupied by Russia and this has been confirmed by the decision of the Strasbourg court. Of course, this is the result of the fact that our government has been active in terms of international mechanisms for the last 10 years," said Papuashvili.



European Parliament to Discuss Events in Georgia and Express Support, Vlad Gheorghe says

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

MEP Vlad Gheorghe told reporters that next week at the plenary session of the European Parliament current events in Georgia and ways of supporting the country would be discussed.

According to Gheorghe, the European structures have not forgotten Georgia, and that now the European Union should show more support to Georgia. He added that together with the MEPs, this support for Georgia and its citizens will be reflected in political declarations.

"Georgia was not forgotten, as we said for historical reasons, the fact that Georgia was forgotten is not true in the European Parliament

and in the European Commission. What is happening in Georgia is a mechanism for drawing attention to Georgia again - the European Union is still watching and talking about Georgia. I am sure that next week a plenary session will be held in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, and in the plenary session, we will discuss what is happening in your country and the support we should show to your citizens. Because I have a strong feeling that we should show more support to Georgia, to its citizens - now they need this support the most. I am sure that many of my colleagues in the European Parliament think the same, and you will see it in the political declarations," said Vlad Gheorghe.

When asked whether the West might impose sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili, Gheorghe said that he does not have an answer about sanctioning specific individuals, because it is up to the European Commission, however, those who help Russia and Russia's aggression will "undoubtedly be on the sanctioned list".

"Sanctions work. That's why Russia is mad... anyone who helps the Russian state, Russia's aggression in any way, and if the European Commission sees a reasonable connection between this person and such actions, they will undoubtedly be put on the sanctions list, and then their assets will be frozen and confiscated," Gheorghe said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

President Salome Zourabichvili Meets with National Security Advisor of United States Jake Sullivan



The President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili met with the National Security Adviser to Joe Biden Jake Sullivan. According to the press release,

they talked about recent developments in Georgia and emphasized the common interest of the two countries in Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

They also talked about President Zourabichvili's advocacy of a unified and inclusive approach to achieving reforms, which is necessary for Georgia to get closer to EU membership. The topic of the meeting was also the draft law initiated by the deputies of the People's Power party, which was dropped by the ruling party after protests.

"They also discussed their common concerns about the draft laws, which provide for the registration and stigmatization of civil society organizations for receiving external funding, which may hinder the important activities of hundreds of Georgian non-governmental organizations. They welcome the government's decision to withdraw both draft laws," the statement reads.

According to the information from the White House, it was discussed at the meeting that it is necessary for Russia to feel the weight of the sanctions imposed by the USA and a coalition of more than 30 allies or partners so that Putin is held responsible for the war he started in Ukraine. Sullivan also emphasized that it is necessary that Georgia does not become a way to circumvent or avoid sanctions.

Shalva Papuashvili Says Comparing Georgia's Democracy to Russia's Totalitarian Regime is 'Unacceptable'

Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili said that comparing Georgia with Russia is unacceptable and politicians and diplomats should not make such comparisons.

"Any comparison with Russia is absolutely unacceptable and impermissible, it doesn't matter who makes this comparison - a Georgian politician or a foreign diplomat. This should be understood by everyone, including ambassadors.

Comparing Georgia with Russia, a country that has occupied part of Georgia's territory is unacceptable and an insult to the Georgian people. Moreover, this comparison has no basis, because, on the one hand, we are talking about Russia,

a country in which there is a totalitarian regime, and we are talking about democratic Georgia. It is impossible not to see it.

I am surprised that such comparisons are made. Comparing Georgia with Russia is unacceptable and the Georgian people will not accept it. It is impossible to compare a totalitarian regime with a democratic regime," Shalva Papuashvili said.

Shalva Papuashvili expressed hope that diplomats will avoid comparing Georgian politicians, authorities, or the country with Russia.



From the Czech Republic to Georgia: Sharing innovative solutions in sustainable growth and good governance



UNDP-Czech Partnership paves the way for development projects

TBILISI. 10 March 2023 – Czech innovators join hands with their Georgian counterparts to implement innovative solutions in the fields of sustainable growth and good governance.

The partnership draws on the resources made available by the Czech Challenge Fund implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of the Czech Republic. Initiatives selected under the 6th Call for Proposals cover the period from October 2022 to October 2023, with US\$40,000 allocated for each of the projects.

"Georgia has the highest number of Challenge Fund projects supported by the Czech-UNDP Partnership," noted Pavel Faus, Senior Project Specialist of the Czech-UNDP Partnership for SDGs, a.i., UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub. "We are proud of the accomplishments achieved by Czech and Georgian partners and partnerships formed around innovative solutions. We look forward to seeing the tangible results of the latest projects in 2023."

"It's important to exchange experience, innovation and good practices among the countries to support sustainable solutions that benefit people and communities," said Nick Beresford,

UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia. "UNDP-Czech Partnership creates a cooperation space between the public, private and civil sectors, bringing onboard new technology and academic expertise."

Twenty-four innovative initiatives have been implemented in Georgia since 2018 with the Challenge Fund support. The ongoing projects include:

- Centre For Mental Health Care Development – First Steps Towards Development of Peer Work in Georgia

The Czech NGO 'Center for Mental Health Care Development' and its Georgian counterpart 'Partnership for Equal Rights' assist Georgia to introduce peer work in mental healthcare, an innovative approach that allows people with mental disorders, undergoing treatment in social and health facilities, to receive support from their peers with a similar experience. The Czech and Georgian civil society organizations train peer workers helping them acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for mental health services. They also develop a sys-

tem of standards framing peer work in mental health.

- VisionCraft - Road Asset Management system using AI for Georgia

Aiming to improve road monitoring in Georgia, the Czech company 'Vision Craft', together with their local partner 'GlobalPort' LLC, is implementing a pilot project, which enables viRAM sensors to collect real-time data from vehicles owned by public agencies. The innovative technology detects road defects with an autonomous onboard sensory system and provides real-time information.

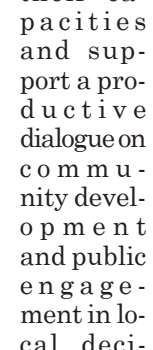
Some of the completed projects include:

- Caritas Czech Republic together with their Georgian partner CRRG-Georgia piloted HIV self-testing solutions and shared their findings with government institutions. The results of the project will inform a rollout of a nationwide project promoting preventive HIV testing in Georgia.

- Czech 'Nesehnuti Brno' in partnership with Georgian 'Abkhazintercont' worked with community-based organizations

and municipal actors to strengthen their capacities and support a productive dialogue on community development and public engagement in local decision-making. Two community-driven micro-projects were completed as a result of this initiative.

- Czech 'AGORA CE' partnered with the Georgian 'Regional Development Agency of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region' to design an energy-efficient wood-burning stove blending Georgian traditions with high-tech European solutions.



The full list of projects is available on the UNDP-Czech Partnership website: undp.cz.

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The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

Weather

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Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 11°C

Tuesday, March 14

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 20°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 10°C

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